



Madrid (Spain), 13 April 2011

### THE IOC ON THE SECOND UC DAVIS REPORT

The IOC is a non-profit organisation. Created under the auspices of the United Nations, its task is to manage the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives. Its list of priorities has always included the harmonisation and fulfilment of the official standards developed to achieve the three key objectives of fair transparent trading, fraud prevention and consumer protection. To realise these objectives, it intends to continue its drive to improve the quality of olive oil products with the utmost scientific rigour and objectiveness, and to team with all countries to bring about this harmonisation and to prevent potential obstacles to trade.

In recent years the IOC Executive Secretariat has urged the authorities of the olive oil producing countries to take the necessary measures to improve the quality of their products. In tandem, it has urged importing countries to comply and align their standards with those of the IOC, the benchmark organisation in the olive world. All the producing countries are either members of the Organisation, who account for 97% of world production, or send observers at its meetings. The IOC is the forum where official methods of analysis are discussed and tested to establish their precision values and validated by consensus to preclude any situations that might seriously damage the image of olive oil. For this work to be as effective as possible the IOC believes it is vital for it to be an all-round, combined effort where each and every country and each and every branch of the world olive oil sector is involved and sets aside its own particular interests.

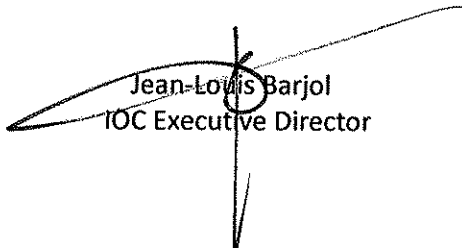
After the media stir caused by the release of its first report in July 2010, the UC Davis Olive Centre has now brought out a second report featuring a more elaborate methodology and better technical presentation. The team of authors and contributors, who had already released similar reports in other countries, is the same as for the first report. The IOC does not mean to question its contents or methodology – it has already voiced its comments – even less so does it wish to spark a controversy. The second report does address some of the questions raised after the publication of the first study. However, both reports have the same evident undercurrent of aggressive, inexplicable criticism of imported olive oil quality. This could cause irreparable damage to the reputation of olive oil, which it has taken so much time and effort to achieve and maintain, and consequently of all of us who work with this product.

The IOC is not aware of the intent of these reports. Even so, it continues to offer its cooperation to carry out as many objective and constructive studies or tests as are needed to improve product quality and to prevent the occurrence of situations that might call into question that quality.

It was with this kind of cooperation in mind that it accepted the application for sensory testing recognition submitted by the Olive Centre tasting panel, which did the organoleptic testing for the Davis study and which earned recognition for 2010/11. It has done the same in the past for physico-chemical testing laboratories from other non-IOC member countries. It has met with associations, representatives of the Centre and the parties concerned by the reports and was invited to visit the Centre by the authors of the study. The desire for transparency and objectiveness that has always characterised the Organisation prompted the IOC to invite the authors of the reports to attend the meeting of the IOC chemistry experts on 7 and 8 April 2011; unfortunately, they were unable to do so. It is noteworthy that the USDA, COOC (Californian Olive Oil Council), AOCS, ISO and representatives from Australia are part of the IOC expert group and are kept permanently informed about all developments.

Back in 2005–2006 the IOC chemistry experts exhaustively reviewed the testing methods applied in the UC Davis reports but decided to advise against their adoption. Although the experts are unanimously opposed to their adoption due to their limited applicability, it was decided to conduct an interlaboratory test in 2011 to re-examine them and determine their field of application in the search for an objective and purely scientific solution. Preliminary results were presented at the chemists' meeting on 7–8 April but it was not possible to discuss this matter in depth because UC Davis was not present.

The IOC is the forum where any aspect or issue of concern to the olive oil industry is discussed. It therefore invites all the producing countries to join the ranks of its membership in order to handle this kind of situation together and to find satisfactory solutions through constructive, all-round cooperation.

  
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IOC Executive Director